

# The Flip Camera: Tips and Best Practices



A Resource from United Methodist Communications



## The Flip Camera: Tips and Best Practices

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*Photo credit: Pure Digital*

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## Introduction

As President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, CBS News and Flip Video announced a contest to encourage Americans to send in videos addressing the challenges or issues that their communities were facing. Thanks to the Flip camcorder, sharing a viewpoint or short piece of news is now as easy as recording a video clip and downloading it online via a USB port.

The potential that this represents for how media organizations produce and present content is tremendous. Flip video offers a way for our audiences to be part of the work we do, making our content in turn more representative of the people we serve.

Beyond producing news content, the Flip is handy for other uses as well. In the office, for example, the camera can be used to record messages by colleagues or clients, capture memorable moments and staff events, and record important parts of meetings.

The Flip camcorder is an easy-to-use tool for gathering video and posting to the Web. It is lightweight and small enough to slip into a pocket or purse – so portable, in fact, that you can easily forget you're carrying it.

Several models of Flip cameras, made by Pure Digital, are on the market. What follows in this paper are operating tips for the basic model, along with shooting and sharing tips that would be useful for any model.

More information about the models available can be found on the Flip video site at <http://www.theflip.com/index.shtml>.

## I. Operating the Flip Camera

### Powering the Camera

The basic Flip camera operates on two AA batteries, which can be accessed by sliding the latch on the bottom of the camera to the unlock position, then sliding the front piece of the camera down and off. Be sure to have extra AA batteries on hand in case the need arises.

More advanced Flip cameras, including the high-definition Flip MinoHD and UltraHD, recharge automatically while the camera is docked in the USB port of your computer. A wall charger also can be used, which will fully charge the batteries in a shorter time.

### Basic Pointers

- 1) Turn it on and off using the gray switch on the side.
- 2) Record by pressing the red button once.
- 3) Stop by pressing the red button twice.
- 4) Review video by pressing the arrow icon to the left of the red button.
- 5) Delete video by pressing the trash can symbol to the right of the red button. \* On the HD Flip cams, you have to say "Yes" to delete a video. The play/pause button is the "Yes" button.
- 6) Zoom in by pressing the plus sign above the red button.
- 7) Zoom out by pressing the minus sign below the red button.
- 8) Go forward or backward through video clips by pressing the arrows on either side of the red button.
- 9) Download video by flipping out the USB connector on the side of the camera and plugging it into the USB port on your computer.

The original Flip camera and MinoHD use a 1.5-inch screen and have 60 minutes of recording time. The UltraHD has a 2-inch screen and two hours of recording time.

### Tips for Shooting

- 1) In most cases – unless you're recording a meeting or event -- **limit length** to 1:30 minutes or briefer. That makes for easier downloading and tighter bites. As you're shooting, look for a moment that seems like a natural stopping point. Cutting the clip off at the right time helps in the editing process.
- 2) **Avoid unnecessary and fast pan shots.** Instead, stay with an image and let the action move through the scene you are taping. When panning a scene, **hold the camera steady** and move it very slowly. Keep the subject in focus. In all cases, keep the camera steady as much as possible and avoid jerky movements. Bracing your elbow with your non-shooting hand, or keeping your "shooting elbow" close to your body, can help steady the camera. A tripod, sold separately, can also keep the camera stationary.
- 3) **Avoid using the zoom** feature unless necessary. The digital zoom will result in loss of image resolution. Though magnified, the image has less quality than what you would get from a camera with an optical telephoto zoom. Instead of zooming, stay at the wide part of the lens and move your whole body closer to the subject. This will also make the image more stable.
- 4) In an interview setting, be as **close to the person** as possible for the camera microphone to sound good. This means you do not use the zoom on the camera but you hold the camera and stand close to the interviewee for the recording.
- 5) **Adjust for ambient noise.** Make sure the sound around you is not distracting. In particular, try to stay away from or minimize your exposure to street noise or lots of talking. If you cannot get away from intrusive background sound, then make sure to include the source of noise in the shot

behind your interviewee. That way, the image explains where the extra noise is coming from. This makes the distraction more acceptable to the viewer.

- 6) **Avoid high-contrast scenes** as much as possible. Dark shadows will go black in the transfer, and shadows across someone's face will not transfer well. Try to put your interview subject in even light so their face is in an even light level throughout. Also avoid backgrounds behind the subject that are too bright or too dark, since this will increase the image contrast and make the image hard to see on the Web. If you are inside a building, try to avoid bright walls behind a dark-skinned person when doing interviews or b-roll. The contrast could be too extreme. Also avoid the fluorescent flicker of lights on the wall behind someone, particularly overseas, where the electrical power is a different voltage and produces a light flicker with cameras set for United States electrical current settings.

## What to Shoot

Remember, less is more if you **plan your shots and the interview** ahead of time. You can do your interview first and then take what you heard and decide what cutaway shots (b-roll) to get. Always try to cover a scene with a wider cover shot for location identification, and then go in to get close-ups, which give the viewer an intimate feel for the setting and the action.

An effective use of the camera is to **record a standup** of someone relating an anecdote or explaining something that is happening in the background.

Before you begin shooting, **coach the person** to think for a moment about what they are going to say – and who the audience is. Tell her or him to stay within a specific time limit -- 1 minute is good. That limit will help them focus their thoughts and keep their comments to the point. Once you turn the camera on, the first thing the person should do in a standup situation is say who they are – “Hi, this is Jane Doe and I am the parish nurse here at First United Methodist Church in Anytown, Arkansas.”

**Direct your camera** in such a way that your subject doesn't fill the frame, and the viewer can get a sense of place from the background.

## II. Editing and Working with Flip Content

### Making a Movie

With Flip software:

Each video clip loaded into the Flip software can be edited. On the right side of the video clip is an image of scissors. If you click on the scissors, you can trim the front or the back of the video clip. You can even lift out footage from the middle of the video if necessary. Once you have a series of videos edited, choose the “Movie” option on the bottom of the screen. The Movie program will allow you to choose short clips to stream together. It will add transitions, titles, credits and audio. It will also ask you the format in which to publish your movie. See tips for sending video for publishing information.

With Windows Movie Maker:

Windows Movie Maker also gives you the option of editing each video clip. The “Split” button, just under the video, enables you to divide a video file in two. Select the starting point you want on your clip and then hit the Split button. It will separate the video at that point. To assemble a movie, drag the selected clips onto the video timeline. You can move the video around on the timeline until it is in the preferred

order. Movie Maker offers you a lot more options for transitions and video effects. You merely drag the effects to the video you choose. You can also add titles and credits.

When doing a clip for news, it's best to keep things as simple as possible. See audio and publishing for more instruction.

### **Working with an audio voice track**

With Flip software:

Flip software will only load audio recordings in an mp3 form. If you have access to an mp3 recorder, you can voice your track, load it onto your computer and go into the Flip software. While you are preparing your video clips under the "Movie" option, one of the questions will ask you to add an audio track. You will browse your computer and add the correct file. You then have the options of adjusting the audio volume for the video as you move through the movie process. If you do not have an mp3 recorder, see options for Movie Maker.

With Windows Movie Maker:

Using Flip camera to record audio: This option requires that you record your audio track using the Flip camera. Just hit "Record" and speak into the microphone, then load the video to the computer. Open Movie Maker and select the "Media Import" option. You will select your voice file (which is still in video form). Movie Maker provides an audio timeline under the video timeline. Drop your file onto the audio timeline. Only the audio will be available. If you right click over the audio, the Movie Maker gives you options for fading the audio up or out and volume options.

Using web cam to record audio: If you have a web cam attached to your computer, you can record a video through the Logitech software. First, record the video and save it. Open Movie Maker and select "Media Import." Select the file that resides under the quick cam folder. Select your file and load. Then drop the video clip onto the audio timeline in Movie Maker. Only the audio will be available. If you right click over the audio, the Movie Maker gives you options to fade the audio up or out and volume options.

## **III. Sharing Flip Video**

### **Tips for Sending Video**

Video clips can be transmitted in several ways, including through an FTP server or a program such as Microsoft SharePoint. Flip.com also offers options for sending video.

For United Methodist Communications staff, SharePoint is the recommended means of sharing Flip video.

- 1) Go to [share.umcom.org](http://share.umcom.org)
- 2) In the user name blank, type `umcom_central\`(your user name, password)
- 3) Click Directory
- 4) Go to the appropriate user group, such as Media Group Administration
- 5) Click Pictures (left side of screen)
- 6) Go to the folder where you want the video uploaded
- 7) Click Upload

### **Posting to Facebook or Flip Online**

The Flip software has a series of options at the bottom of the program, located just under the video clips. Under the "Share" category, you can e-mail footage or prepare the video for online use, which makes a smaller file size for posting.

If you choose to e-mail the footage: The video is actually posted on Flip.com and a link is sent to your recipients for viewing the video online.

If you choose to post online yourself: Various options enable you to prepare the file for AOL, MySpace, YouTube or "other sites." The "other sites" option actually prompts the program to prepare a Web-size file and places it in a folder on your desktop for you to post manually online.

### **Posting Through Movie Maker**

Once you have prepped your video, choose "Publish Movie" to get a format for either e-mail or posting online. Movie Maker will prompt you for the type of file to create. Your options are "This computer," "Recordable CD," "E-mail," or "Digital video camera." Choosing "This computer" prompts you to choose the quality and file size of your movie. Once you publish, go to your online source and add video.

### **Embedding Video Online**

When embedding video on a Web site, convert it to flash or post it to a video-sharing site and then capture the embed code and paste it to the site. This makes load times much faster and minimizes file size on the Web site's hosting server. It also gives two avenues for video when embedding from a video-sharing site like YouTube, making it a more viral media opportunity.

## **IV. Real World Applications**

### **Possibilities for Ministry**

Simple and inexpensive, the Flip camera is an ideal tool for ministry at any level of the church.

Local congregations can easily use the Flip to provide content to their church Web sites and Facebook pages. Possibilities include:

- A greeting from the pastor to visitors on the Web site.
- A clip of the church's youth group engaged in an interesting activity. The clip could conclude with the young people inviting other young people to join them or check them out.
- A musical highlight from one of the worship services or other church setting. Music is one of the most powerful resources that churches have for reaching people and keeping them coming back. The Flip camera can be used to convey that power and energy. Congregations are advised to be mindful of copyright restrictions with regard to the music used.
- Testimonials from individuals about the church's importance in their lives and what they get out of it. Flip video also would be a good way for church members to share their experiences from mission trips or other interesting activities. This could be particularly effective for the young people in the church.
- Important information that people might need to know, such as a demonstration of how to assemble a flood bucket for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, or a demonstration of how to interact with a street person or other person in need who might approach you.
- A Bible study message from a Sunday school leader.
- Invitations from the women's and men's groups, as well as from Scouts and other groups.

- Special church plays or other productions, particularly those staged by children. They will be well watched! Again, as with recording church music, congregations should adhere to copyright guidelines on the play or piece of work involved.
- A riveting sermon or special guest presentation that is worth sharing with a wider audience.
- A special message about an upcoming initiative at the church, such as the Souper Bowl of Caring, the One Great Hour of Sharing, Room In The Inn or the annual ice-cream churn.

Annual conferences can use the Flip camera to:

- Tell visitors to the conference site about the 10,000 doors that the denomination offers for connecting, doing good works and transforming lives.
- Record a greeting from the bishop for posting on the Web site. Important messages from the bishop also can be recorded in response to natural disasters, special conference needs or campaigns, etc.
- Share footage from conference Volunteers In Mission trips to areas such as the U.S. Gulf Coast, Africa, Indonesia.
- Share messages from young people in the conference about their faith journeys and their hope and dreams for the church, and what excites or concerns them.

General agencies can use the Flip camera to:

- Show their staffs in action, doing ministry and making a difference. These types of video clips could be very effective in showing people in the pews how their collection-plate dollars are being put to good use.
- Convey important messages for people in the denomination about the focus of their ministries and ways people can connect through giving, volunteering or prayer.
- Provide highlights of special events, such as the United Methodist Women's Assembly or General Conference, that might interest a wide audience.
- Diversify the voices and faces on their Web site by intentionally seeking video from a variety of demographic groups.

These are only a few suggestions for how Flip video technology can be used across the church. The camera has applications for the church soup kitchen, posting testimonials from the people who are served and the volunteers who help out; the jurisdictional conference, posting video clips from candidates for bishop; and the evangelist, giving insight into how to pray.

The possibilities are limited only by our imaginations. We are called to use those imaginations, along with the tools we are given, to advance God's work and transform lives.

## Appendix

### Additional Resources

#### Flip Video Store

[http://www.theflip.com/store/?gclid=CLyJ\\_rKW-5oCFQa-sgod3jvjdA](http://www.theflip.com/store/?gclid=CLyJ_rKW-5oCFQa-sgod3jvjdA)

#### How to use a Flip Video Camera

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mh6s9gNoFro>

#### Flip UltraHD Is Pure Digital's Best Pocket Camcorder Yet

<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/noah-robischon/editors-desk/flip-digitals-ultrahd-camcorder>

#### First 100 Days (CBS and Flip contest)

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/14/politics/100days/main4721439.shtml>